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FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9072  
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE  
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BERLIN 001591

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/21/2017  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [GM](#) [AF](#) [MARR](#)  
SUBJECT: GERMAN BUNDESTAG'S AFGHANISTAN MANDATE RENEWAL  
DEBATE SHOWS POSITIVE SIGNS

REF: BERLIN 01539

Classified By: Charge John Koenig for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) Germany's debate on the future of its Afghanistan mandates continues unabated despite the Bundestag's summer recess. The recent unfortunate deaths of three German police officers (who were killed when a remotely detonated mine exploded near their vehicle) and the one-day kidnapping and release of a German aid worker in Kabul made headlines throughout the country, and caused some to question continued German engagement. But most mainstream German politicians and commentators agreed that Germany must not waver in its support for Afghanistan in the face of aggression or terrorism. Indeed, senior government officials involved in Germany's activities in Afghanistan all expressed further resolve, rather than a weakening of Germany's commitment. Following the deaths of the German police officers, FM Steinmeier urged continued involvement by stating "if we give up now, then the Taliban have won." Chancellor Merkel went on to state that "German engagement is longterm, vital, and indispensable."

¶2. (C) Skeptical voices remain and will continue to make their case against OEF. For example SPD Foreign Relations Committee member Niels Annen (who visited Afghanistan last week), reiterated his call for an end to German participation in OEF. His reason for pulling out, however, was that SPD party members oppose the mandate and U.S. forces remain "uncooperative" there. According to SPD party contacts, between one-third and one-half of SPD members continue to oppose the OEF mandate. On a positive note, we are increasingly hearing from German politicians and commentators who recognize the breadth of OEF's role in Afghanistan, especially for its role in training the Afghan National Army (ANA). CDU foreign policy spokesman Eckhard von Klaeden, in an op-ed article in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ) on August 22, highlighted the vital work OEF is doing in Afghanistan training security forces - something unheard of even a few months ago. SPD Chairman Kurt Beck stated publicly his support for renewing all three of Germany's mandates (ISAF, Tornadoes, OEF) during the upcoming Bundestag session.

¶3. (C) The grand coalition leadership decided on August 20 to merge the ISAF (3,000 personnel) and Tornado mandates (500 personnel) into one and have the Bundestag vote on them on October 11-12 (REF A). Foreign Ministry sources have told us they expect the merged mandate to number 3,500. Because the Tornado deployment had required only about 200 personnel on a continuing basis, the merger of the mandates might open up headroom of a few hundred troops, which in principle could be devoted to other ISAF tasks.

¶4. (C) At the request of SPD Chairman Kurt Beck, the

coalition government will submit the OEF mandate for a vote in mid-November, following the SPD's October 26-28 party convention. Beck specifically cited his desire to win greater support of party members for OEF at the convention. In this respect, he has aligned his political fortunes with the OEF mandate more clearly than ever before. While the decision to hold the OEF vote in November (rather than merging it with the ISAF vote as earlier rumored) could result in a protracted debate on the merits of OEF, it will also provide the SPD leadership additional time to resolve internal disputes over the mission.

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